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ABSTRACT

This publication describes an effort of the U.S. Department of Education to promote comprehensive educational reform by consolidating various elements and programs. The "cross-cutting" approach described considers the links among vocational-technical education, elementary and secondary education, postsecondary education, and workforce preparation programs; and involves coordinating planning and cooperation at the federal, state, and local levels. To convey how these cross-cutting efforts translate into specific initiatives, brief descriptions of specific strategies that address the cross-cutting approach are provided: (1) The Education Flexibility (Ed-Flex) Partnership Demonstration Program; (2) Waivers of Federal Education Program Requirements; (3) The GOALS 2000: Educate America Act; (4) The School-to-Work Opportunities Act; (5) Integrated Review Teams; (6) Regional Conferences on Improving America's Schools; and (7) Serving Out-of-School Youth in a School-to-Work Framework. (KC)

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U.S. Department of Education
Office of Vocational & Adult Education
Division of Vocational-Technical Education

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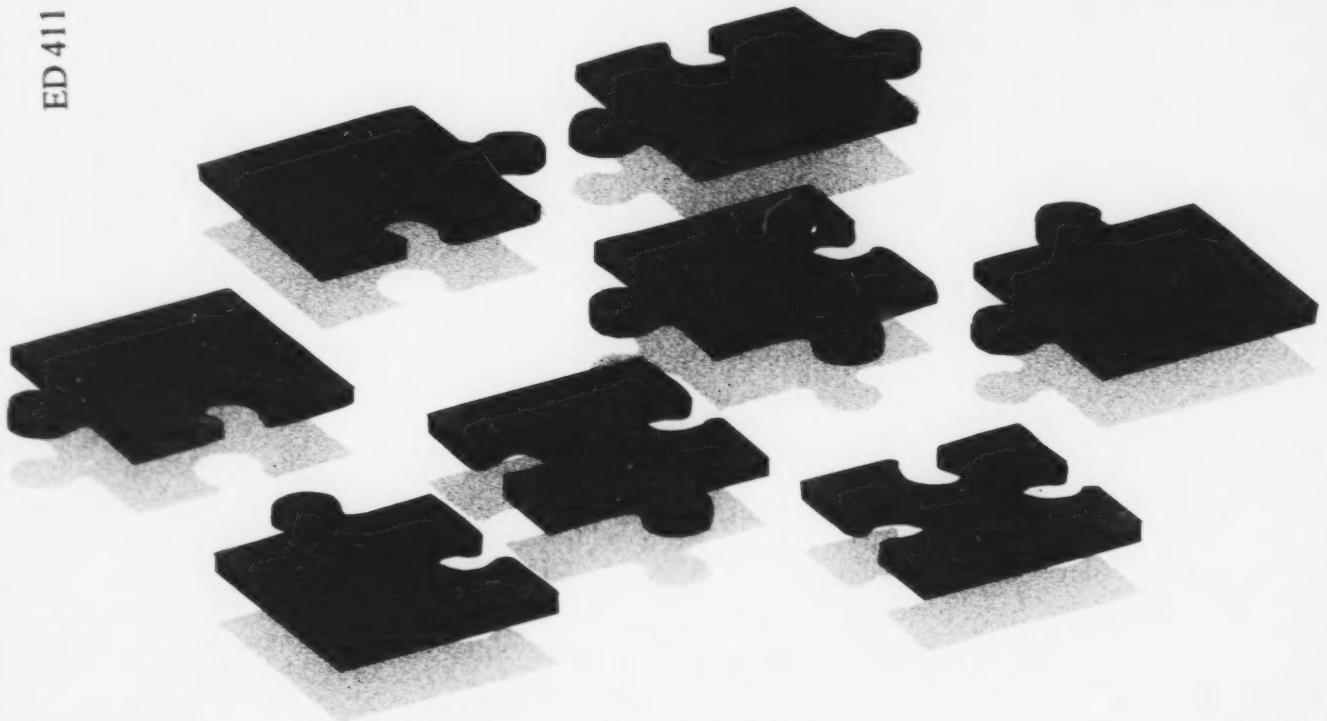

Cross-Cutting Education Reform Initiatives

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1997

Division of Vocational-Technical Education

In an effort to promote comprehensive education reform, the U.S. Department of Education has proposed consolidating various elements and programs in education. One approach is to consider the links among vocational-technical education, elementary and secondary education, postsecondary education, and work force preparation programs. This involves coordinated planning and cooperation at Federal, State and local levels, working in a "cross-cutting" framework.

The Department has initiated several strategies to support "cross-cutting" efforts. To convey clearly how these "cross-cutting" efforts translate into specific Departmental initiatives, the Division of Vocational-Technical Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, has developed brief descriptions of specific strategies that address the "cross cutting" approach. As vocational-technical education is more and more recognized as a true vehicle of education reform, the Division plans to keep practitioners informed about the Department's activities to connect Federal programs with State and local education reform. These initiatives include:

- Ed-Flex
- Waivers of Federal Education Program Requirements
- Oregon Options
- The Goals 2000: Educate America Act
- The School-to-Work Opportunities Act
- Integrated Review Teams
- Regional Conferences on Improving America's Schools
- Serving Out-of-School Youth in a School-to-Work Framework

Division of Vocational-Technical Education

Ed-Flex

The Education Flexibility (Ed-Flex) Partnership Demonstration Program provides greater State and local flexibility in using Federal education funds to support locally-designed, comprehensive school improvement efforts, in exchange for increased accountability. The Goals 2000: Educate America Act, a vehicle for achieving comprehensive education reforms aimed at helping all students, established Ed-Flex.

Ed-Flex allows the Secretary of Education to designate up to twelve States to participate. These twelve States have the authority to waive certain Federal statutory or regulatory requirements affecting the State and local school districts and schools. To be eligible to apply for Ed-Flex, a State must have:

- ✓ a comprehensive school improvement plan, approved by the Secretary of Education
- ✓ the authority to waive its own statutory or regulatory requirements, while holding districts and schools affected by the waivers accountable for the students' academic performance.

Ed-Flex can help participating States and local school districts use Federal funds to provide maximum support for effective school reform based on challenging academic standards for all students.

A State may waive certain requirements of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) and the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) applicable to the designated programs. However, Ed-Flex does not have the authority to waive civil rights or Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requirements. Such waivers would not be consistent with the purpose of the Ed-Flex demonstration -- to strengthen effective school reform efforts for all children.

Ed-Flex States named to date include Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Texas and Vermont.

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Division of Vocational-Technical Education

Waivers of Federal Education Program Requirements

The Goals 2000: Educate America Act, the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA), and the School-to-Work Opportunities Act give States and school districts unprecedented flexibility to adapt Federal education programs to the educational needs of students and school communities.

Despite States' increased flexibility provided by these Acts, in certain instances Federal requirements may hinder effective innovations and needed improvement. Through waiver provisions, the Secretary of Education can grant waivers of program requirements if they impede school improvement efforts. The U.S. Department of Education encourages States and school districts to seek waivers if they conclude that a waiver of Federal requirements would improve teaching and learning for students.

Specifically, waivers can be granted for requirements of:

- ✓ all Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) Programs, except Impact Aid
- ✓ the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act (requirements may be waived in States with approved Goals 2000 or School-to-Work plans)
- ✓ certain requirements of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) and the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) applicable to the above Acts.

However, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and civil rights waivers cannot be granted. Such waivers would not be consistent with school improvement efforts.

As of Fall 1996, the U.S. Department of Education had considered 153 requests for waivers and approved 133. After consultation with Department staff, another 59 waiver applicants learned they could implement their plans for school improvement without a waiver. Requests for waivers provide the Department with important information on the impact of Federal requirements at the local level and help guide implementation decisions at the State and local level.

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Division of Vocational-Technical Education

The GOALS 2000: EDUCATE AMERICA ACT

The GOALS 2000: EDUCATE AMERICA ACT is based upon principles learned from successful school reform efforts in States and communities during the past ten years. These principles include:

- **High expectations and standards for all students**. High standards and enriched course content produce better student performance. All students can learn more than we currently ask of them. When we expect more of students, they work harder and achieve more.

- **New approaches to teaching**. Helping students meet challenging standards requires new ways of teaching. Teacher preparation and professional development programs need to be overhauled and improved.

- **Making schools accountable**. We need to give schools the tools and flexibility to do their job, and then hold them responsible for results.

- **Building partnerships**. We have learned that schools cannot do it alone. Parents, educators, students, business, labor, and public, private and nonprofit groups need to be active partners in the reform effort.

The GOALS 2000: EDUCATE AMERICA ACT

- **Supports the development of challenging voluntary academic standards** that define what students should know and be able to do and offers States and local communities the support they need to put those higher standards to work in their classrooms

- **Encourages the development of a new generation of student performance assessments** -- new methods of gauging student achievement that will be linked to national, State, and local standards and which will be valid, reliable, and free of discrimination

- **Supports the creation of voluntary national occupational skills standards** that, with the help of business and labor, will define the knowledge and skills needed for the complex, high-wage jobs of tomorrow

- **Supports a "bottom-up" grassroots approach to school reform**, with the Federal government assisting States and local communities in developing and implementing their own comprehensive and innovative reform programs.

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Division of Vocational-Technical Education

The School-to-Work Opportunities Act

The School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 established several objectives:

- ✓ to create school-to-work opportunities systems in each State for all students
- ✓ to ensure that all youth who participate in school-to-work opportunities systems achieve high academic and occupational standards, are prepared for further postsecondary education and for the high-skill careers of the 21st century
- ✓ to build State, Federal and local partnerships among schools, employers, labor, community organizations, and parents to develop and sustain school-to-work opportunities as part of a lifelong learning system.

The Act provides Federal seed money to States and local partnerships to leverage other resources.

The three core elements of school-to-work are:

- ✓ *school-based learning*- classroom instruction based on high academic and business-defined occupational skill standards
- ✓ *work-based learning*- career exploration, work experience, structured training and mentoring at job sites
- ✓ *connecting activities* - courses integrating classroom and on-the-job instruction, matching students with participating employers, training of mentors and the building of other bridges between school and work.

A school-to-work opportunities experience:

- ✓ integrates school-based and work-based learning
- ✓ integrates academic and occupational learning
- ✓ establishes effective linkages between secondary and postsecondary education
- ✓ provides students
  - ⇨ the opportunity to complete career majors
  - ⇨ understanding of all aspects of the industry
  - ⇨ equal access to a full range of program components including, recruitment and placement activities.

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Division of Vocational-Technical Education

Integrated Review Teams

The purpose of the Integrated Review Teams (IRTs) is to provide an opportunity for a consolidated review of State activities by State, Federal and local personnel in the context of education reform. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) hopes to streamline Federal monitoring and technical assistance efforts.

IRTs are composed of ED representatives from all programs administered under the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA), including:

- ✓Even Start
- ✓Migrant Education
- ✓Compensatory Education
- ✓Eisenhower Programs
- ✓Safe and Drug-Free Schools
- ✓School Improvement Programs
- ✓Impact Aid
- ✓Bilingual Education
- ✓Indian Education

Although there is specific IASA program representation on the IRTs, each team member reviews State activities in the framework of comprehensive education reform.

Because they are intended to reflect one of the Department's cross-cutting initiatives, the IRTs also include ED representatives from programs administered under the:

- ✓Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act Amendments of 1990
- ✓School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994
- ✓Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
- ✓Goals 2000: Educate America Act.

Three IRT site visits have been completed -- one each in North Dakota, Oregon and Texas. In early 1997 site visits to New York and West Virginia took place. Typically, two days are spent at the local level and one day at the State level, meeting with IRT counterparts.

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Division of Vocational-Technical Education

Regional Conferences on Improving America's Schools

During the Fall of 1996, the U.S. Department of Education held three Regional Conferences on Improving America's Schools. The conferences focused on the programs and strategies of the Improving America's School and Goals 2000 Acts, but also identified ways to coordinate them with programs authorized under other pieces of legislation, including the:

- Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act Amendments of 1990
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
- School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994
- new forms of technical assistance from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

The goal of the Regional Conferences was to demonstrate how various education programs can be coordinated to design a **comprehensive service delivery system** that supports **high standards** for **all students.**

The conferences offered an excellent forum to participate in important joint planning, involving cross-cutting issues leading to education reform and an opportunity to learn how the U.S. Department of Education programs can be part of a coordinated system.

A cross-section of participants attended: State and local program managers; school and district administrators; teachers; and, representatives from service agencies, institutions of higher education and the business community.

The **conferences** scheduled for **1997** will be held in:

San Diego, California	**October 16-18**
Dallas, Texas	**November 15-16**
Washington, D.C.	**December 14-16**

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Division of Vocational-Technical Education

Serving Out-of-School Youth in a School-to-Work Framework

Many students leaving high school, with or without a diploma, are insufficiently prepared for the modern workplace, both in academic and work-related skills. Young people without a high school diploma are less numerous than they were in earlier years. However, as the requirements for labor market success change, the adverse consequences of dropping out of school become increasingly severe.

Under the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994, the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Labor have awarded seven community partnership grants to further develop innovative ways of involving dropouts in school-to-work. Grant recipients are involved in out-of-school youth initiatives that are currently operating in a school-to-work framework, demonstrating promising practices in classroom/community-based learning, work-based learning, and connecting activities. The purpose of the grants is to advance the progress already made by these community partnerships and to share lessons learned. The model sites will use grant funds to incorporate new school-to-work components or to accelerate the development of the school-to-work elements already in place.

The projects, reflecting promising school-to-work practices for school dropouts, will encourage new initiatives and serve as models for similar programs serving out-of -school youth. The seven grantees were chosen, out of 190 applicants, for being the most advanced in their development of programs that include school-to-work components. In addition, the grantees represent a variety of school-to-work youth initiatives -- vocational education, adult education, Job Corps, Youth Build -- that contain a solid foundation of school-to-work elements on which to build.

The grantees are:

Black Hill Special Services Cooperative, Sturgis, SD
Just A Start Corporation, Cambridge, MA
Springdale Job Corps Center, Troutdale, OR
Visions Youth Works, Newport, PA
Center for Employment Training, San Jose, CA
Metropolitan Community College, Omaha, NE
The Fresno Private Industry Council, Fresno, CA

Some of the grantees' activities may result in the development of materials, curriculum, and strategies for replication of promising practices by other similar service providers.

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